

SBAC Meeting

December 17th 2007

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Lauren Slocum

Mark Deion

Ted Almon

Senator Josh Miller

Phil Papoojian

Jerry Meyer

Sherri Carerra

Kelly Carello

David Lucier

Denise Barge

Dorothy Reynolds

Jennifer Wood

Eli Zupnick

Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts

The Lt. Governor called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

She thanked the group for coming and explained that the purpose of this meeting is to talk to small business community about specific health care issues, as well as talk about legislative agenda for this session

Health Care:

Lt. Governor Roberts began by discussing her thoughts and process for moving forward with healthcare reform. She said that on October 16h she gave a speech that included a four part framework for reform: Maintain what works in the current system, broaden access to health care coverage to every Rhode Islander, contain health care costs and increase health care value, and have a system that strengthens hospitals and primary care providers and supports Rhode Islanders in finding the best, most affordable coverage. She said that she plans on introducing legislation this session.

Lt. Governor Roberts went on to discuss Mission: Healthy RI, an advisory workgroup composed of stakeholders and members of the community brought together to address health care issues. She said that these groups are topical, focused, participatory discussions with experts, and invited anyone interested in the small business community to attend. She said more details are available at her website, www.ltgov.ri.gov.

She also explained that she has also been meeting with groups to hear from them about their thoughts about health care reform. These groups include doctors, insurers, hospitals, patient advocates, etc. She said that her goal is to hear from them about specific issues and how those issues will affect their group. This meeting is an

opportunity to hear from the small business community about what they want to see in a health reform, as well as what they would not want to see.

Lt. Governor Roberts then asked the group for their thoughts on an individual mandate. A number of members of the group expressed support for this idea, as well as some concerns about the fiscal impact. A few group members advocated for a different approach, arguing that a payroll tax to cover health care would be better for small business in the long run.

The group then discussed the need for better health planning, as well as for facts and data surrounding how individuals utilize the health care system.

The group also discussed the potential impact of an employer mandate. A number of members said they would support this, but a few said that they worried about the impact that this would have on the smallest businesses that do not currently provide care.

The group then briefly discussed the need for more transparency in health care, and then moved on to a discussion of what an appropriate benefit package should look like. The group discussed the fact that people expect their insurance plan to cover everything, and really don't understand what the medical procedures actually cost.

Legislation:

Senator Miller then discussed the SBAC legislative agenda.

He first brought up the SBA tax credit. The group discussed this, and decided that this would be an appropriate issue to pursue in this budget situation, but only if it was attached to a fiscal impact study. The Lt. Governor added that she generally feels that we must maintain focus on state investment, even in rough budget years.

He then brought up the fire code. There seemed to be a group consensus that we should look into pushing the small business representative on board of appeals. There also seemed to be consensus surrounding waiting to see what the new regulations were before pushing for legislation.

Senator Miller also brought up the issue of regulatory standardization, and talked about the fact that SBAC would work with partner organizations about making this a priority for business.

Lt. Governor Roberts adjourned the meeting at 10:05 am.